

# bmj.com news roundup

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## WHO and science publishers team up on online register of trials

The World Health Organization has teamed up with a group of biomedical publishers to register its trials on the company's online database. From this month all randomised controlled trials that have been approved by WHO's ethics review board will be registered on the database run by Current Controlled Trials, a London based company, under the company's unique international standard randomised controlled trial number (ISRCTN).

Current Controlled Trials, which is part of the Current Science Group of biomedical publishers, launched the registration system in May 2003. It is the first online service to assign unique numbers to randomised controlled trials in all areas of health care and from all over the world.

Since its launch it has registered numbers for more than 1800 trials. The online search service is free to anyone seeking information on clinical trials.

Fiona Fleck *Geneva*

The register and search facility can be accessed from the Current Controlled Trials website: [www.controlled-trials.com](http://www.controlled-trials.com)

## Researchers find no link between vaccination and type 1 diabetes

A team of Danish researchers have reported finding no association between childhood vaccination and the development of type 1 diabetes (*New England Journal of Medicine* 2004;350:1398-404).

The research was carried out after reports linking the two were published between 1996 and 2003 in a number of medical journals, including *Autoimmunity* and *Medical Hypotheses*.

The researchers evaluated data on all children born in Denmark between the begin-



## First NHS trusts awarded foundation status

The first trusts in England to be awarded foundation status have been named, amid continuing concerns that the policy will worsen inequalities in the NHS.

The 10 trusts authorised by the body responsible for overseeing foundation trusts, the Independent Regulator of NHS Foundation Trusts, will still have to meet key national targets, but they will be able to exercise greater autonomy in areas such as setting local priorities and borrowing from commercial sources.

The successful NHS trusts are Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals, Bradford Teaching Hospitals, Countess of Chester Hospital, Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals, Homerton University Hospital, Moorfields Eye Hospital, Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals, Royal Devon and Exeter, the Royal Marsden (pictured), and Stockport.

The public sector union UNISON, which has opposed the creation of foundation hospitals, has now urged the government to keep an open mind on their future until a review into the first wave of trusts reports its findings.

The BMA also initially opposed plans for foundation hospitals. But a spokesperson said, "We still have concerns, but we are looking to be sure that the implementation of the plans goes smoothly in the hope that our concerns won't be realised."

Stephen Pincock *London*

ning of January 1990 and the end of December 2000 for whom detailed information on vaccination and type 1 diabetes was available. They used Poisson regression tools to estimate the rate ratios for type 1 diabetes according to vaccination status.

They found that the rate ratio for type 1 diabetes in children who received at least one dose of vaccination, compared with unvaccinated children, was 0.91 (95% confidence interval 0.74 to 1.12). They also found that the development of type 1 diabetes in children who are genetically predisposed to the disease was not significantly associated with vaccination.

Chibuzo Odigwe *BMJ*

## Stronger measures needed to avoid flu pandemic in Europe, commission warns

Governments in Europe must step up their defences to avoid a potential influenza pandemic, the European Commission has warned.

The threat of a pandemic is considered particularly acute for the European Union, because people, animals, and goods can circulate freely throughout all its member states. The last one occurred in 1968.

To counter this threat, David

Byrne, the public health commissioner, has tabled a strategy that would ensure that governments, health authorities, research laboratories, and the drug industry are ready to handle any pandemic.

The preparedness plan divides the influenza cycle into predefined phases and levels. These would be recognised on the basis of agreed criteria and would act as triggers for counter-measures.

The strategy asks each member state to establish a reference laboratory for human influenza—an expensive undertaking for many EU countries, as only seven such laboratories currently exist in the EU.

The plan also aims to place drug companies on a higher state of alert. At the moment the EU has only six vaccine manufacturers, whose output would be enough to cover just 25% of the EU's population.

Rory Watson *Brussels*

The commission's working document is at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/index/\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/index/_en.html)

## BMJ Publishing Group sells its books department

The BMJ Publishing Group has sold its book publishing arm, BMJ Books, to Blackwell Publishing. BMJ Books, which has existed for 20 years, will move 328 titles to Blackwell, including the ABC series of books for clinicians. Blackwell Publishing, the world's second largest publisher of biomedical and medical journals, publishes about 100 medical books a year.

Richard Smith, editor of the *BMJ* and chief executive of the BMJ Publishing Group, said: "The books will retain the BMJ Books imprint alongside that of Blackwell and, given Blackwell's international sales operation, we are confident that more books bearing our imprint will be sold."

He added: "This decision has not been easy to make, but it is no longer feasible for us to continue an extensive book publishing business."

Owen Dyer *London*